

Out in 2002 (published by the CCD Housing Task Force and the Technical Assistance Collaborative) found that SSI recipients on average would need to pay 105 percent of their monthly SSI income to rent a modest one bedroom unit. The individuals whom we represent, many of whom depend solely on SSI or other disability benefits, are current participants in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program or on Section 8 waiting lists. The Section 8 voucher program is central to their ability to have an opportunity to find affordable and accessible housing in the community.

ADMINISTRATION PROPOSAL WOULD SERIOUSLY HARM PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The CCD Housing Task Force strongly believes that the Administration's Flexible Voucher Program proposal would significantly erode housing assistance for the poorest people with disabilities. We believe this proposal actually undermines stated Administration disability policy goals designed to promote community integration under the New Freedom Initiative and end chronic homelessness.

The Administration's proposal would cause serious harm to people with disabilities in the following ways:

Proposed reductions in funding of over \$1 billion for FY 2005 would mean that at least 250,000 households, including at least 50,000 households with disabilities, would lose their Section 8 assistance within the next year;

The Administration's Flexible Voucher Program proposal would eliminate targeting to the lowest income households. The federal targeting is a current Section 8 program requirement that has helped people with disabilities to live in the community. The new program could be used for households up to 80 percent of median income and dedicated exclusively to homeownership—closing the doors on many people with disabilities.

Under the Administration's Flexible Voucher Program, people with disabilities could be required to pay much higher rents than they can afford. Current rules limiting tenant rents to 30-40 percent of income would be eliminated.

PHAs would be given incentives to assist higher income households, a policy that would result in fewer people with disabilities receiving vouchers.

PHAs could establish time limits on voucher holders. When a person's disability is permanent, their housing assistance should not be time limited. A time limited voucher could force people with disabilities back into nursing homes, institutions and other restrictive settings, and homeless shelters.

Congress would no longer have the authority—as it has for the past seven years—to target Section 8 vouchers for people with disabilities who have lost housing due to elderly-only policies. Over 50,000 people with currently funded disability vouchers would be at-risk.

Over the long term, the Administration's budget projections for 2005-2009 clearly show further erosion in voucher funding—putting more people with disabilities at-risk of losing their Section 8 assistance. By 2009, Section 8 expenditures would be more than \$4.6 billion below what the Congressional Budget Office estimates would be needed to maintain the program's current level of funding. The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) projects that cuts of this magnitude would mean that 600,000 vouchers—or 30 percent of the vouchers currently authorized—would be eliminated.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES NEED SECTION 8 VOUCHERS

People with disabilities have the highest level of unmet need for housing assistance of any group eligible for federally subsidized

housing. The CCD Housing Task Force estimates that more than 3 million people with disabilities receiving SSI do not currently receive any housing assistance from HUD. The current Section 8 program is literally a "lifecycle" for people with disabilities who rely on SSI, as well as other low income people with disabilities who simply cannot afford the cost of rental housing. Section 8 Vouchers are needed by people with disabilities who have been negatively affected by the loss of housing opportunities because of federal "elderly only" housing policies. Over 500,000 units of HUD public and assisted housing have "elderly only" policies, and more units are being designated "elderly only" every day.

THE ADMINISTRATION'S FLAWED RATIONALE

The Administration's proposal and their statements defending it are seriously flawed. The CCD Housing Task Force urges Members of Congress to treat this proposal with the same degree of skepticism and concern as it treated last year's Housing Assistance for Needy Families (HANF) proposal. One senior HUD official's public statement, that the current program's income-targeting requirements should be eliminated because they are not needed, can be rebutted by the fact that over 3 million people with disabilities below 30 percent of median income still do not receive federal housing assistance.

HUD officials state that converting the current voucher program to a block grant is needed to control the programs "upward spiral in costs over the past two years". This statement is also misleading. HUD's failure to produce accurate data and projections on Section 8 program costs cannot be used to imply that Section 8 program spending is "out of control". The rising costs in the Section 8 program during the past few years are due in part to improved PHA voucher utilization—as urged by the Congress—and leasing of new vouchers authorized from 1999-2002. Other cost factors include the escalating rental market of the late 1990s (which has now stabilized) and higher subsidy levels needed by households who have recently lost employment. CBPP's analysis projects that spending for the voucher program for FY 2005 will grow by only 1.6 percent, which is lower than the rate of inflation.

CONCLUSION

The current Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program is the most important federal housing resource to address the housing needs of those with low incomes. We believe that Congress should maintain its responsibility to protect people with disabilities who receive or need Section 8 assistance. The CCD Housing Task Force urges Congress to fully fund the Section 8 voucher program in FY 2005, which means a \$600 million increase over FY 2004 appropriation levels.

We also urge Congress to reject the Administration's Flexible Voucher Program proposal. This proposal is nothing more than another attempt by the Administration to achieve what they could not achieve in Congress last year, when bipartisan opposition to the HANF block grant proposal ensured its failure. We believe that Congress should continue to have the direct authority to ensure adequate funding for the program and to make decisions on how the Section 8 program is utilized.

HUD's role in administering the Section 8 program and monitoring the use of vouchers by PHAs is critically important. HUD should be held responsible for devoting the necessary resources to carry out these responsibilities successfully. Many of the current problems with the Section 8 program can be attributed to HUD's mismanagement—including long-standing mismanagement of over 50,000 vouchers targeted to people with

disabilities. Most importantly, the Section 8 program should continue to be targeted to addressing the most critical housing needs in our country today—those of extremely low-income people including people with disabilities.

CCD Housing Task Force

American Association of People with Disabilities
American Association on Mental Retardation
American Network of Community Options and Resources
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Brain Injury Association of America
Easter Seals
Epilepsy Foundation
International Association of Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems
National Mental Health Association
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Spina Bifida Association of America
The Arc of the United States
United Cerebral Palsy
United Spinal Association (formerly Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association)

HONORING THE BAY AREA ORIGINAL TUSKEGEE AIRMEN

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 8, 2004

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the 23 original San Francisco Bay Area Tuskegee Airmen. Tomorrow, March 9, 2004, marks the celebration of Tuskegee Airmen Day in Oakland. On behalf of the 9th Congressional District, I would like to thank them for their tireless and devoted service.

The Tuskegee Airmen are a noble and proud group. Their legacy as the first African Americans ever to qualify as fighter pilots is remarkable and worthy of preservation. These efforts helped pave the way for generations of African-American soldiers, officers, pilots, sailors, and Marines. The Tuskegee airmen didn't lose a single bomber they escorted during the World War II.

Further, their story holds many valuable lessons to be shared with future generations. The principles of life, liberty, and democracy that they fought for and strengthened serve us all today. After liberating Europe, they returned to their homes and hearths to pursue the fight for equal rights, for which we are in their debt.

The Bay Area Original Tuskegee Airmen are: Reuben B. Bilbo, Samuel Broadnax, Dr. Richard Caesar, William A. Campbell, Le Roy Gillead, James C. Goodwin, Arthur C. Harmon, Calvin C. Hobbs, Harold Hoskins, George J. Iles, Alvin J. Johnson, Dr. Wendell Lipscomb, Robert A. Matthews, Fred L. McLaurin, Adolph J. Moret, Jr., George W. Porter, Leon Spears, Morris T. Tatum, James A. Walker, James C. Warren, Theodore Wilson, Lester Williams, and Leona F. Woodward.

Finally, as we honor these brave veterans today, I want to honor their contributions as men, fathers, medical doctors, professors, artists, engineers, technicians, and researchers. I

take great pride in joining their families and friends to recognize and celebrate the many accomplishments and contributions of the Bay Area Original Tuskegee Airmen. God bless them all.

JEWISH COUNCIL FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS OPPOSES IRRESPONSIBLE TAX CUTS

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 8, 2004

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago I was privileged to be able to speak to the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, at a national convention held in Boston, representing organized Jewish communities across the country. The various Jewish communal organizations are active on a variety of fronts, including efforts to alleviate poverty and social distress. The participants in the organizations that make up the JCPA are themselves individuals who give freely to charity,

and understand in part because of this that while private charity is extremely important, it is no substitute for well-funded government programs that meet social needs.

Drawing on their experiences in this regard across the country, the attendees at the Plenum of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs adopted a resolution, which called on the Congress "to reject efforts to make permanent the 2003 tax cuts."

As the resolution notes, "to feed the hungry, clothe the poor, heal the sick, and educate our children, our Federal Government requires the resources that come from tax revenue."

This does not mean that the council opposes all of the tax cuts previously enacted, but this strong statement against the proposal to make permanent all of the 2003 tax cuts deserves very serious attention, given the moral credentials of those who enacted it.

Mr. Speaker, because this is one of the most important questions that will be facing us in this Congress, I ask that the very compelling resolution against making all of the 2003 tax cuts permanent be printed here.

JCPA RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION TO MAKING PERMANENT THE 2003 FEDERAL TAX CUTS

As Jews and Americans, we are committed to aiding members of our community in need through the work of our synagogues, CRCs and other private organizations, while relying on our Federal Government to ensure that it has the fiscal means to meet the needs of all its citizens. To feed the hungry, clothe the poor, heal the sick, and educate our children, our Federal Government requires the resources that come from tax revenue.

The Bush Administration's proposed Fiscal Year 2005 budget seeks to make permanent the Federal tax cuts passed in 2003. To do so would increase deficits by \$2 trillion between 2005-2014, inhibiting Federal investment in both existing and new programs. These tax cuts will affect the lives and well-being of our children, and our children's children, who will struggle in a society weakened by the fiscal decisions our government is now making. The JCPA calls on the Administration and Congress to enact legislation that will allow the Federal Government to meet its responsibilities to its citizens and to reject efforts to make permanent the 2003 tax cuts.